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CHICAGO TRIBUNE

2 August 1981

STAT

# New beating reports in CIA spymaster case

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(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

NEW YORK — Authorities here are investigating new reports that Dennis McNell, a figure in the securities scandal that forced the resignation of CIA spymaster Max Hugel, may have been beaten on several occasions in recent months at a tavern owned by McNell's wife.

The Tribune learned that investigators are focusing on one alleged incident in which the 41-year-old McNell was attacked by an unknown assailant one night last spring as the establishment was preparing to close.

"We have heard about the beating," said one source involved in the McNell investigations. "We don't know anything else. We don't know whether it was just a barroom fight, or whether there was more to it than that."

McNELL DIED June 1 in a Queens hospital while being prepared for surgery for a suspected ruptured spleen. No autopsy was performed at the time.

However, New York City's chief medical examiner, Dr. Elliott Gross, Thursday called for exhuming McNell's body and conducting an autopsy to determine whether he had been murdered.

Dr. Gross's request followed publication of a story in Wednesday's Tribune that quoted a business associate of McNell's as saying he had heard from someone living in New York that McNell had been "abducted and beaten" twice this year, once in April or May and a second time just before his death.

"THE ASSOCIATE, Chicagoan Stanley Kielmar, said he "assumed" the alleged beatings were connected to dealings that McNell's two surviving brothers, Sam and Thomas, had had with Hugel.

Shortly before Dennis McNell's death, Sam and Thomas McNell contacted the Washington Post to accuse Hugel of joining them in an illegal stock manipulation deal. The accusations, when published, prompted Hugel's immediate resignation, even though he denied the charges.

(The whereabouts of Sam and Thomas McNell have been a public mystery for several weeks, but business associates said Friday that they have been in contact with Thomas. Directors of Triad Corp. said in a brief statement that at

least two of its directors "had recently been in telephonic contact" with him. An FBI spokesman said the bureau had "no information that we can give out" on the whereabouts of the McNells. Triad, a gas and oil exploration company, did not elaborate on its statement.)

Queens County District Atty. John Santucci said it probably would be the middle of next week at the earliest before he would be able to decide whether to grant the medical examiner's request and seek a court order exhuming the body.

ALONG WITH probing the new reports of beatings, Santucci also is sifting through the complex medical evidence surrounding the case.

In a letter to the district attorney Thursday, the medical examiner, after examining McNell's hospital records, said that a ruptured spleen was a possible cause of the death. Then he added: "A rupture of the spleen is most frequently of traumatic origin and often the result of a criminal act."

Dr. Michael Plokamakis, a hospital staff physician who treated McNell the night he died, said in published reports Friday that the patient was suffering from cirrhosis and alcoholic hepatitis at the time of his death.

THEREFORE, HE explained, the liver wasn't making protein needed to halt the sort of hemorrhage that apparently had started in the abdomen.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Dr. Plokamakis was asked whether the existence of cirrhosis and hepatitis could have been the cause of a ruptured spleen. "It could be explained by a number of possibilities, including trauma" such as that by a beating, he said.

In an interview with The Tribune last Sunday night, McNell's widow, Jean, said she believed her husband was in good physical health at the time of his death, except for a mild diabetic condition.

SHE ALSO SAID she knew nothing about any beatings her husband had suffered.

However, a long-time friend and business associate of Dennis McNell, Thomas Walsh, said Friday that McNell told him he had been beaten on several occasions in recent months at the Queens bar he